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AUTHOR Woodard, Peggy G.; Suddick, David E.  
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## ABSTRACT

There are many causes of poor academic performance among college students and many methods of assisting academic underachievers to improve their academic standing. A study was conducted to compare the rates of ongoing academic success of students who had been academically suspended and who reentered the university less than one year following academic suspension versus those who reentered after more than one year. Data were drawn from one university's records of students (N=111) who were applying for readmission to the university in 1984 through 1986. The data indicated that approximately 66% of readmitted students achieved academic success, but rates of success varied widely by status. Seventy-six percent of students who returned less than one year after suspension succeeded academically. For students who were absent from the university for at least one year, a marked disparity in their rates of ensuing academic success was noted. Students who availed themselves of counseling services had a 63% rate of success compared to 38% for students not seeking the services of the counseling center. (NB)

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Peggy G.  
Woodard

Abstract

AN EVALUATION OF THE SUCCESS OF COUNSELED REENTRY STUDENTS  
WITH PRIOR HISTORY OF POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Peggy G. Woodard and David E. Suddick

Governors State University

A comparison of the academic success of students who reentered the university less than one year following academic suspension vs. those who reentered after more than one year is presented. The data indicates that approximately sixty percent of readmitted students achieved academic success; however, this varied by the students' approach to problem solution. The Special Admissions Committee was successful in identifying suspended students who met with academic success after readmission to the university. Also, a comparison of students who worked with a counselor in the university counseling center vs. those who did not indicated that academic suspended students who received counseling had a higher rate of academic success than those who did not seek counseling services. In addition, both causes of academic failure and methods for assisting these suspended students will be reviewed.

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A review of the literature indicates there are many varied causes of poor academic performance among college and university students. In addition, there are many methods of assisting academic underachievers to improve their academic standing. Factors such as poor study skills, poor time management, lack of motivation, poor concentration, uncertain career goals, and test anxiety were cited as main causes of poor academic performance (Altmaier, Rapaport and Seeman, 1983; Culler and Hulahan, 1980; Hart and Keller, 1980; and Mitchell and Ng, 1972). Individual differences in the learning process were also identified as having a direct effect on academic achievement. Successful students appear to process information in more depth and encode it in detail while retaining the original information (Schmech and Grove, 1979; Craik and Tulving, 1975). Emotional disturbance, emotional immaturity, neurological dysfunction, and lack of ability were also identified as causes for poor academic success (Bednar and Weinberg, 1970; Valine, 1976).

In response to the various causes of poor academic achievement, many solutions have been put forth. The university counseling center is viewed by administrators and faculty as a primary service provider to assist in improving academic performance on the part of its students

(Bednar and Weinberg, 1970). Methods of working with failing under-achievers include both individual and group counseling, workshops, tutorial assistance and self-help programs (Kjos and Woodard, 1987; Mitchell, Hall and Piatkowska, 1975; Woodard, 1987). Treatment techniques which have been successful in working with underachievers are behavioral and cognitive techniques which target specific behaviors and work toward an established goal of improved academic performance (Mitchell and Piatkowska, 1974; Patterson, 1971). In addition, locus of control and self-efficacy beliefs toward education and career choice often play a significant role in success or failure for the student in academic distress. Counselors can use this social learning theory to assist these students in reaching academic success (Bandura, 1977; Mitchell and Krumboltz, 1984).

As the literature demonstrates, the causes of poor academic performance and their respective solutions are varied. Recognizing this, the university opted to institute a Readmissions Committee with the authority to recommend that students who were academically suspended be readmitted before the normal one year of nonattendance. Students are required to submit massive documentation to identify the nature of their problem, the solution that is being implemented to correct the problem, and a statement of the students' career objectives.

For other students, they may choose to be away from the academic setting for at least a year, but they need assistance after

readmission. These students are accorded the option of assistance through the counseling center.

A comparative group to the heretofore is students who are readmitted after one year of academic suspension and who do not seek assistance after readmission. The commitment of these students to completing their degree objectives may be lower than those who have demonstrated action above and beyond those set forth in policy.

Thus, the purpose of this study was generally to compare the rates of ongoing academic success of students academically suspended via the alternative by which they reentered the university. More specifically, the relative merits of alternatives beyond those found in policy were evaluated. In addition, the relative merits of follow-up counseling was investigated.

#### Population

Approximately 6,000 students attend this upper division, commuter campus. These students, who come from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, are likely to be working full or part-time while attending school. Almost one-half are undergraduate students who have typically spent four or more years completing their lower division coursework before transferring to the university. An average of sixty-five students are suspended for poor academic achievement each trimester. The data for this study was drawn from the records of students who are reapplying for readmission to the university in calendar years 1984 through 1986.

### Findings

A total of 111 students who were academically suspended returned to the university. Almost 60 percent, 66 of these students, performed successfully after readmission, but these rates of success varied widely by status. Over three-fourths, 76 percent, of the students who were allowed to continue their education in less than one year per the recommendation of the Readmissions Committee succeeded academically. For students who were absent from the university for at least one year, a marked disparity in their rates of ensuing academic success was noted. Students who availed themselves of counseling services had a 63 percent rate of success compared to 38 percent for students not seeking the services of the counseling center.

The frequency tabulations of condition of reentry and ensuing academic performance are set forth in Table 1. When these data were analyzed by the chi square statistic, the resulting value of 10.34 ( $df = 2, p < 0.01$ ) was found to be statistically significant.

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Insert Table 1  
about here  
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To glean further insight into the academic success rates of counseled students, the scope of their interaction with the counseling center was ascertained. Over 90 percent, 11 of the 12, of students who underwent two or more sessions were academically successful compared to 20 percent, 1 in 5, of their peers who truncated their

sessions after one meeting. The tabulations of these frequency data, given in Table 2, were analyzed by the Fisher exact probability test ( $p = 0.0004$ ). Thus, the rates of academic success varied significantly by the continuation of treatment in the counseling center after the first session.

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Insert Table 2  
about here  
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#### Discussion

The early return of suspended students via student appeal to the University Readmissions Committee has been found to be a viable alternative per the criterion of ensuing academic success. This rate was most similar to the success rate of students who were away from the academic setting for at least one year, but who sought counseling beyond one session after readmission to the university. The comparative group, i.e., readmits who did not avail themselves of assistance, performed at a significantly lower rate of success.

In comparison to readmitted students not seeking assistance, their peers who sought assistance as well as students who petitioned for early readmission demonstrated more than a tacit interest in continuing their education. If this demonstrated action of preparing a massive report for the Readmissions Committee or continued counseling after readmission is denoted as a motivation variable, then proactive

action on the part of the student who has been academically suspended may well be a most germane factor in predicting later academic success when the students continue their education.

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TABLE 1

Academic Success of Suspended Students  
by Readmission Status

| Conditions of<br>Reentry                           | Ensuing Performance |                |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
|                                                    | Satisfactory        | Unsatisfactory |
| Early Per Readmissions<br>Committee Recommendation | 29                  | 9              |
| Policy Guidelines and<br>Students Counseled        | 12                  | 5              |
| Students Not Counseled                             | 25                  | 31             |

Chi-square value = 10.34, df = 2,  $p < 0.01$

TABLE 2

Academic Success of Suspended Students  
Who Were Counseled by Their Treatment Patterns

| Number of<br>Sessions | Ensuing Performance |              |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------|
|                       | Successful          | Unsuccessful |
| One                   | 1                   | 4            |
| Two or more           | 11                  | 1            |

Fisher Exact Probability Test Value 0.004